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Review of:

Alessandro Perutelli, *Frustula poetarum. Contributi ai poeti Latini in frammenti*, (PBtron editore), Bologna 2002; pp.187; ISBN 88 555 2652 9.

Text published in: *Mnemosyne* 60, 2007, 501

Given the state in which many ancient literary works have been transmitted, students of such texts have some special responsibilities. Among these is the task to find appropriate ways to read and appreciate fragmentary poets, a category that is rather over-represented in the extant material. Whether these poets are Greek or Roman, studies often restrict themselves to questions of textual criticism, authenticity, or historical details, without even attempting to arrive at a comprehensive view of the works and their authors. The new book by Alessandro Perutelli (P.) is, unfortunately, hardly an exception.

It contains nine papers on fragmentary poets such as Caecilius, Catulus, Laevius, Sueius, Varro (*Bimarcus*), Calvus, Cinna, Varius (Frg.4), and a piece on the lost *Orpheus* by Lucan. All papers have been published in Italian scholarly journals between 1984 and 2000, with the exception of the first paper, which is new. The focus somewhat varies according to the article in question, but P. is mostly concerned with textual matters, interpretations of individual words, phrases, or lines, and various discussions with scholarly literature. Several of the papers contain appendices and addenda, occasionally even both. Most of the paper on Sueius Frg. 1 takes the form of a commentary.

A book collecting separate, published papers may well be worthwhile, but I would suggest that such a book should add some extra dimension still unavailable to readers of the individual papers (e.g. a thematical, literary, historical, or ideological scope, or a unity in period or genre). Here, no such a specific element can be distinguished that connects or unites the nine articles, other than their philological accuracy. Accordingly, there seems little reason to read the nine papers one after the other. Typically perhaps, no introductory or concluding essay has been added, the first essay rather plunging *medias in res* with some observations on the lost *Aethrius* by Caecilius.

The collection of P.'s papers in the form of this book will be useful to specialists of the fragmentary poets in question, but it is difficult to imagine any other possible readership. Why should we read fragmentary poets in the first place? What attitude should we adopt towards these texts? To what extent are we allowed to speculate about their contexts in order to make sense of them? It remains for other to address such important questions.

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